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AMERICA and the RUSSIAN FUTURE

By George F. Kennan

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AMERICA AND THE RUSSIAN FUTURE

By George F. Kennan

THE very virulence with which Americans reject the outlook and practice of those who now hold power in the Kremlin implies in the strongest possible way the belief in, and desire for, an alternative—for some other Russian outlook and some other set of practices in Russia to take the place of those we know today. Yet we may be permitted to ask whether there is any clear image in our minds of what that outlook and those practices might be, and of the ways by which Americans might promote progress toward them. At the present time, in particular, when the coexistence of the two systems on the same planet has led to such immense strains and anxieties everywhere, and to so much despair of its successful continuation, there is a tendency on the part of many people to permit the image of a different and more acceptable Russia to become eclipsed by, or even identified with, the question of victory or defeat in a future war. Some Americans are already reverting, merely in contemplation of a possible war, to the American bad habit of assuming that there is something final and positive about a military decision—that it is the ending of something, and the happy ending, rather than a beginning.

There could, of course, be no greater error than this, quite apart from any consideration of the blood and sacrifice which war involves. A war against Soviet power which could be said to be relatively successful militarily (and we would do well to remember that no such war could be more than relatively successful) would in itself assure little or nothing in the way of progress toward the achievement of the sort of alternative we might wish; at the most it would only make more immediate various aspects of a problem which already exists and which every American who objects to Soviet behavior must, in consistency, have in mind anyway, war or no war. That is the problem of the kind of Russia which we would prefer to see; the kind with which we ourselves could, let us say, live easily; the kind which would permit the existence of a much more stable world order; the kind to which it would be both realistic and suitable for us to aspire.

This problem of the possibility of a different and preferable Russia is not really a question of war or peace. War in itself will not bring about such a Russia. Indeed it would be most unlikely

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to lead in that direction unless accompanied by many wise and strenuous efforts besides the military one. And a continued absence of major war will not preclude the coming of a different Russia. All of that depends upon a great many other things which would have to be done by a great many people, either in war or in peace. Not all of these things can be done by Americans. So far as direct action is concerned, the bulk of them cannot be. But our possibilities for influencing the outcome are significant; and we must remember that there may be times when our efforts may be capable of swinging the balance one way or the other. For that reason our own relationship to the Russian future is something worth our most strenuous thought and attention. And in our efforts to determine it, two things are of major importance: 1, that we should know what we want; and 2, that we should know how to conduct ourselves in order to facilitate, rather than to impede, the coming into being of what we want. The word "facilitate" is used advisedly; for we are dealing here with a foreign country, and our rôle can be at best a marginal one, supplementary to a far more important rôle which others must play.

II

What sort of Russia would we like to see before us, as our partner in the world community?

Perhaps the first thing to get straight here is the sort of Russia there is no use looking for. And such a Russia—the kind we may *not* look for—is easy to describe and envisage, for it would be a capitalistic and liberal-democratic one, with institutions closely resembling those of our own republic.

If we look first at the question of the economic system, we see at once that Russia has scarcely known private enterprise as we are familiar with it in this country. Even in pre-Revolutionary times the Russian Government always had a close hold on a number of economic activities, notably transportation and the armament industry, which in our country have traditionally, or at least normally, been private. There were, to be sure, in the earlier period of Russian history, distinguished families of private Russian entrepreneurs, famous for their bold commercial pioneering in the undeveloped areas of the realm. But by and large indigenous private capital remained more conspicuous in the exchange than in the production of commodities. The great domestic business was trade, rather than manufacture. And business

did not stand in so high repute as in the West. There was a traditional, and deeply Russian, merchant class; but it was not generally noted or respected for breadth of outlook or for any enlightened concept of its own responsibility to society. The portrayals of it in Russian literature are generally negative and depressing. The members of the landed gentry, whose tastes and prejudices were authoritative in the social field, often looked down on business, and themselves tended to avoid participation in it. The Russian language, in fact, never acquired a word comparable to our expression "businessman;" it had only the word for "merchant," and this term did not always have a pleasant connotation.

As Russia became industrialized, in a sudden rush of activity which took place around the turn of the century, there were clearly apparent the absence of an adequate tradition of responsibility and restraint on the part of the capital-owning class and a general lack of preparedness, on the part of the state and of society generally, to cope with the new strains. This industrial development, proceeding largely on a basis of individual enterprise rather than of widely distributed corporative ownership, was marked by sudden accumulations of fortunes in the hands of individuals and families not always well prepared for such affluence. Often the mode of expenditure of wealth appeared to other people as little creditable as the means by which it had been accumulated. Individual capitalists and workers lived in close proximity—indeed, many of the factory owners lived in the compounds of their factories. Such conditions often bore greater resemblance to the pattern of early Industrial-Revolution capitalism, as Marx had described it, than to conditions in advanced Western countries. This fact may well have had something to do with the success of Marxism in Russia. The Russian industrial capitalist was generally visible in the flesh, and as often as not he had the rotundity, and sometimes (not always) the vulgarity and callousness, of the capitalist of the early-Communist caricature.

All these things go to show that whatever private enterprise may have been in Tsarist Russia, it had not yet come to hold anything resembling the respect and significance in the eyes of the people that it had acquired in the older mercantile countries by the beginning of this century. Perhaps with time it would have. The prospects were steadily improving. Examples of efficient and progressive industrial management existed in Russia before the Revolution, and were increasing.

But all this, it must be remembered, was a long time ago. Thirty-three years have elapsed since the Revolution. Those years, in the strenuous conditions of Soviet life, have witnessed the passing of a full generation. Of the people capable of influencing the course of events in Russia today only an insignificant minority recall the pre-Revolutionary days at all. The younger generation has no comprehension or concept of anything but the state capitalism that the Soviet régime has enforced. And what we are talking about here is something not even in the present but in the indefinite future.

Bearing all this in mind, we see that there is no Russian national understanding which would permit the early establishment in Russia of anything resembling the private enterprise system as we know it. This is not to say that some such understanding will not some day develop. It may, if circumstances are favorable. But it will never be a system identical to our own. And no one will usefully be able to force the pace, particularly no one from outside.

It is true that the term "Socialism" has been used for so many years in close intimacy with the term "Soviet" that it is now hateful to many people, both within and without the borders of the Soviet Union. But it is easy to draw wrong conclusions from this phenomenon. It is conceivable that retail trade and the performance of the small individual services which have so much to do with the pleasantness of daily life may some day return in large measure to private hands in Russia. In agriculture, as we shall see presently, there will certainly be an extensive return to private ownership and initiative. There is a further possibility that the system of mutual production-coöperation by groups of artisans (*artels*)—a system peculiarly rooted in Russian tradition and understanding—may some day point the way to economic institutions which could represent a highly important and promising innovation in the approach to modern problems of labor and capital. But large sections of economic life known to us as the normal provinces of private enterprise will almost certainly remain in national hands for a long time to come in Russia, regardless of the identity of the political authority. This should surprise no American, nor should it offend any. There is no reason why the form of Russian economic life, beyond certain major exceptions that will be mentioned below, should be considered a matter of vital concern to the outside world.

Agriculture deserves a special place in our thinking on this sub-

ject. Agricultural enterprise is the Achilles heel of the Soviet system. Left in private hands, it constitutes a concession to human freedom and individual initiative—a concession which the true Bolshevik finds abhorrent. Forcibly collectivized, it requires an elaborate apparatus of restraint if the farmer is to be made to stay on his land and to produce. The forced collectivization of the farming population is probably today the greatest single cause of discontent in the Soviet Union, except possibly the excessive cruelty of the police, with which it is intimately connected. It may be taken for granted that one of the first acts of any future progressive authority in Russia would be to abolish this hated system of agricultural serfdom and to restore to the farmers the pride and incentives of private land ownership and free disposal of agricultural commodities. Collective farms may continue to exist; and they probably will, for the most abhorrent feature of the present system is not the concept of producer-coöperation itself but the element of restraint that underlies its application. The collectives of the future will be voluntary coöperatives, however, not shotgun marriages.

Turning to the political side, it was said above that we could not expect to see the emergence of a liberal-democratic Russia along American patterns. This cannot be too strongly emphasized. It does not mean that future Russian régimes will necessarily be unliberal. There is no liberal tradition finer than the strain which has existed in the Russia of the past. Many Russian individuals and groups of this day are deeply imbued with that tradition, and will do all in their power to make it the dominant element in the Russian future. In that effort, we may wish them well without reservation. But we will be doing them no favor if we permit ourselves to expect too much to happen too fast, or look to them to produce anything resembling our own institutions. These Russian liberals will have no easy road to walk. They will find in their county a young generation that has known nothing but Soviet power and has been trained to think subconsciously in the terms of that power even when it has resented and hated it. Many features of the Soviet system will stick, if only for the reason that everything has been destroyed which might seem to have constituted an alternative to them. And some features will deserve to stick, for no system that lasts over decades is entirely without merits. Any program of government for a future Russia will have to adjust itself to the fact that there has been this Soviet

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interlude, and that it has left its positive marks as well as its negative ones. And no members of future Russian governments will be aided by doctrinaire and impatient well-wishers in the West who look to them, just because they are seeking a decent alternative to what we know today as Bolshevism, to produce in short order a replica of the Western democratic dream.

Above all, it behooves us Americans, in this connection, to repress, and if possible to extinguish once and for all, our inveterate tendency to judge others by the extent to which they contrive to be like ourselves. In our relations with the people of Russia it is important, as it has never been important before, for us to recognize that our institutions may not have relevance for people living in other climes and conditions and that there can be social structures and forms of government in no way resembling our own and yet not deserving of censure. There is no reason why this realization should shock us. In 1831 de Tocqueville, writing from the United States, correctly observed: "The more I see of this country the more I admit myself penetrated with this truth: that there is nothing absolute in the theoretical value of political institutions, and that their efficiency depends almost always on the original circumstances and the social conditions of the people to whom they are applied."

Forms of government are forged mainly in the fire of practice, not in the vacuum of theory. They respond to national character and to national realities. There is great good in the Russian national character, and the realities of that country scream out today for a form of administration more considerate of that good. Let us hope that it will come. But when Soviet power has run its course, or when its personalities and spirit begin to change (for the ultimate outcome could be one or the other), let us not hover nervously over the people who come after, applying litmus papers daily to their political complexions to find out whether they answer to our concept of "democratic." Give them time; let them be Russians; let them work out their internal problems in their own manner. The ways by which peoples advance toward dignity and enlightenment in government are things that constitute the deepest and most intimate processes of national life. There is nothing less understandable to foreigners, nothing in which foreign interference can do less good. There are, as we shall see presently, certain features of the future Russian state that *are* of genuine concern to the outside world. But these do not include

the form of government itself, provided only that it keep within certain well-defined limits, beyond which lies totalitarianism.

III

What, then, do they include? To what kind of a Russia may we reasonably and justly look forward? What attributes are we, as responsible members of the world community, entitled to look for in the personality of a foreign state, and of Russia in particular?

We may look, in the first place, for a Russian government which, in contrast to the one we know today, would be tolerant, communicative and forthright in its relations with other states and peoples. It would not take the ideological position that its own purposes cannot finally prosper unless all systems of government not under its control are subverted and eventually destroyed. It would dispense with this paranoiac suspiciousness we know so well, and consent to view the outside world, ourselves included, as it really is and always has been: neither entirely good nor entirely bad, neither entirely to be trusted nor entirely to be mistrusted (if only for the simple reason that "trust" has only a relative significance in foreign affairs). It would consent to recognize that this outside world is not really preoccupied with diabolical plots to invade Russia and inflict injuries on the Russian people. Viewing the outside world in this way, the statesmen of a future Russia could approach it with tolerance and forbearance and practical good humor, defending their national interests as statesmen must, but not assuming that these can be furthered only at the expense of the interests of others, and vice versa.

No one asks for a naïve and childlike confidence; no one asks for a fatuous enthusiasm for all that is foreign; no one asks that the genuine and legitimate differences of interest which have always marked, and will always continue to mark, the relations between peoples be ignored. We must expect Russian national interests not only to continue to exist but to be vigorously and confidently asserted. But in a régime that we could recognize as an improvement over what we know today we would expect that this would be done in an atmosphere of emotional sanity and moderation: that the foreign representative would not continue to be viewed and treated as one possessed of the devil; that it would be conceded that there might be such a thing as innocent and legitimate curiosity about a foreign country, which could be permitted to be gratified without fatal detriment to that country's national life;

that it would be recognized that there might be individual foreign business aspirations which did not aim at the destruction of the Russian state; that it would be admitted, finally, that persons desirous of travelling across international borders might have, and are even apt to have, motives other than "espionage, sabotage and diversion"—such trivial motives, in fact, as the enjoyment of travel or the peculiar impulses that move people to wish to visit relatives from time to time. In short, we may ask that the grotesque system of anachronisms known as the Iron Curtain be lifted from the world, and that the Russian people, who have so much to give and so much to receive as mature members of the world community, cease to be insulted by a policy that treats them as children, too immature to have normal contact with the adult-world, too undependable to be let out alone.

Secondly, while recognizing that the internal system of government is in all essential respects Russia's own business and may well depart drastically from our own, we are entitled to expect that the exercise of governmental authority will stop short of that fairly plain line beyond which lies totalitarianism. Specifically, we may expect that any régime which claims to contrast favorably with that which we have before us today will refrain from enslaving its own labor—industrial and agricultural. There is a reason for this: a reason even more solid than the shock we experience at witnessing the sickening details of this type of oppression. When a régime sets out to enslave its own working population in this way, it requires for the maintenance of the arrangement so vast an apparatus of coercion that the imposition of the Iron Curtain follows almost automatically. No ruling group likes to admit that it can govern its people only by regarding and treating them as criminals. For this reason there is always a tendency to justify internal oppression by pointing to the menacing iniquity of the outside world. And the outside world must be portrayed, in these circumstances, as very iniquitous indeed—iniquitous to the point of caricature. Nothing short of this will do. Carefully hiding the realities behind the Iron Curtain, the régime depicts "abroad" to its own people in every lurid hue of hideousness, as anxious mothers attempt to intimidate their children and fortify their own authority by embroidering the image of that sinister "something" which "will get you if you don't watch out."

In this way, excess of internal authority leads inevitably to unsocial and aggressive conduct as a government among govern-

ments, and is a matter of concern to the international community. The world is not only heartily sick of this comedy by reason of the endless and wearisome falsehoods it involves, but it has learned to recognize it as something so irresponsible and dangerous that, maintained for any length of time, it easily becomes a major hazard for world peace and stability. It is for this reason that we, while recognizing that all distinctions as between freedom and authority are relative and admitting that 90 percent of them are no business of ours when they affect a foreign country, still insist that there is an area here in which no government of a great country can move without creating the most grievous and weighty problems for its neighbors. That is precisely the area in which the régime of Hitler found itself at home, and in which the Soviet Government has moved for at least these past 15 years. We may state bluntly that we can recognize no future Russian régime as one with which we could have a satisfactory relationship unless it keeps out of this danger area.

The third thing we may hope from a new Russia is that it will refrain from pinning an oppressive yoke on other peoples who have the instinct and the capacity for national self-assertion. In mentioning this matter, we are entering upon a delicate subject. There is no more difficult and treacherous one in the entire lexicon of political issues. In the relationships between the Great-Russian people and nearby peoples outside the confines of the old Tsarist Empire, as well as non-Russian national groups that were included within that empire, there is no conceivable pattern of borders or institutional arrangements which, measured against the concepts prevailing to date, would not arouse violent resentments and involve genuine injustices in many quarters. If people in that part of the world are going to go on thinking of national borders and minority problems in the way that they have thought of them in the past and continue to think of them today, Americans would do well to avoid incurring any responsibility for views or positions on these subjects; for any specific solutions they may advocate will some day become a source of great bitterness against them, and they will find themselves drawn into controversies that have little or nothing to do with the issue of human freedom.

What is plainly necessary, and the only solution worthy of American encouragement, is the rise of such a spirit among all the peoples concerned as would give to border and institutional arrangements in that troubled area an entirely new, and greatly

reduced, significance. Whether that spirit will actually arise, we cannot tell. And precisely because we cannot tell this, Americans should be extremely careful in committing their support or encouragement to any specific arrangements in this sphere; for we cannot know what they mean until there is clarity as to the spirit which will underlie them. How can we know whether a given national group will require an independent status, or a federal status, some special brand of local self-government, or no special status at all, until we know something about the psychological climate in which these arrangements would operate? There are peoples of non-Russian ethnological character on the borders of the Great-Russian family whose economic existence is intimately bound up with that of the Great-Russians. The future should see a minimum of disruption of these economic ties, and that in itself would normally warrant a close political connection. But its nature would always have to depend on what sort of attitudes prevailed on both sides of the line: on the degree of tolerance and insight which the peoples involved (and not only the Russian people) might be able to bring to the establishment of these relationships.

We are all agreed, for example, that the Baltic countries should never again be forced against the innermost feelings of their peoples into any relationship whatsoever with a Russian state; but they would themselves be foolish to reject close and coöperative arrangements with a tolerant, nonimperialistic Russia, which genuinely wished to overcome the unhappy memories of the past and to place her relations to the Baltic peoples on a basis of real respect and disinterestedness. The Ukraine, again, deserves full recognition for the peculiar genius and abilities of its people and for the requirements and possibilities of its development as a linguistic and cultural entity; but the Ukraine is economically as much a part of Russia as Pennsylvania is a part of the United States. Who can say what the final status of the Ukraine should be unless he knows the character of the Russia to which the adjustment will have to be made? As for the satellite states: they must, and will, recover their full independence; but they will not assure themselves of a stable and promising future if they make the mistake of proceeding from feelings of revenge and hatred toward the Russian people who have shared their tragedy, and if they try to base that future on the exploitation of the initial difficulties of a well-intentioned Russian régime struggling to overcome the legacy of Bolshevism.

There is no use underestimating the bitterness of these territorial problems, even assuming the utmost of goodwill and relaxed tolerance on the part of the peoples concerned. Some of the dispositions taken at the close of the Second World War (made even worse today by the deliberate policy on the part of certain governments to turn the provisional prematurely into the permanent) represent distinctly unhealthy situations, not conducive to a peaceful future. Some day these dispositions must be changed; and it will admittedly require tact on the part of all concerned, and forbearance bordering on the miraculous, if these changes are to be effected without a further compounding of violence and bitterness. For that unhappy situation the peoples of Europe have to thank the calculating cynicism of the Bolshevik leaders and the amiable indulgence of the Western Powers.

But one of the greatest of the German oppositionists in the time of Hitler, writing at the risk of his life to a friend in England during the recent war, said:

> For us Europe after the war is less a problem of frontiers and soldiers, of top-heavy organizations and grand plans than . . . a question of how the picture of man can be restored in the breasts of our fellow-citizens.[1]

Would that the Nazi gallows had spared this man for the present and the future; he was both right and courageous, and such people will be desperately needed if the future of the region from the Elbe to Bering Strait is ever to be happier than it has been in the past. An American who wishes his influence to be beneficial in that part of the world would do well to impress on any friends he may have from the Iron-Curtain countries the folly of a continuation, by them or anyone else, of these dreary and profitless manipulations with so-called national boundaries and with the naïve loyalties of bewildered linguistic groups which have passed for statemanship in that area in the past. There are more important things than where the border runs, and the first of these is that on both sides of it there should be tolerance and maturity, humility in the face of the sufferings of the past and the problems of the future, and a realization that none of the important problems of the future for any of the peoples of Europe is going to be solved entirely, or even primarily, within the country's national boundaries.

These, then, are the things for which an American well-wisher

[1] "A German of the Resistance. The Last Letters of Count Helmuth James von Moltke." London: Oxford University Press, 1948.

may hope from the Russia of the future: that she lift forever the Iron Curtain, that she recognize certain limitations to the internal authority of government, and that she abandon, as ruinous and unworthy, the ancient game of imperialist expansion and oppression. If she is not prepared to do these things, she will hardly be distinguishable from what we have before us today, and to hasten the arrival of such a Russia would not be worth the care or thought of a single American. If she is prepared to do these things, then Americans will not need to concern themselves more deeply with her nature and purposes; the basic demands of a more stable world order will then have been met, and the area in which a foreign people can usefully have thoughts and suggestions will have been filled.

IV

So much, then, for the kind of Russia we would like to see. How should we, as Americans, conduct ourselves in order to promote the realization of, or at least an advance toward, such a Russia?

In our thinking on this subject we must be careful to distinguish between direct action, *i.e.* action on our part directly affecting persons and events behind what is now the Iron Curtain, and indirect action, by which we mean action taken with respect to other things—with respect, let us say, to ourselves or to our relations with other people—and affecting the Soviet world only obliquely and incidentally.

Most regrettably, as the world is today, the possibility for direct action by Americans toward the ends discussed above must be examined both in terms of a possible war and in terms of the continuation of the present state of "no major war." The first of these contingencies must unfortunately be discussed first, for it has become the dominant prospect in the minds of many people.

If war comes, what we can do directly to promote the emergence of a more desirable Russia? We can hold steadily and clearly in mind the image of the kind of Russia we would like to see and assure that military operations are shaped in such a way as to permit it to come into existence.

The first part of this task is a negative one: not to let ourselves be diverted by irrelevant or confusing concepts of war aims. We can avoid, this time, the tyranny of slogans. We can avoid confusing ourselves with grandiose and unrealistic, or even meaningless, phrases designed simply to make us feel better about the

bloody and terrible business in which we are engaged. We can remember that war—a matter of destruction, brutalization and sacrifice, of separations, domestic disintegration, and the weakening of the deeper fabrics of society—is a process which of itself can achieve no positive aims: that even military victory is only the prerequisite for some further and more positive achievement which it makes possible but by no means assures. We can have the moral courage, this time, to remind ourselves that major international violence is, in terms of the values of our civilization, a form of bankruptcy for us all—even for those who are confident that they are right; that all of us, victors and vanquished alike, must emerge from it poorer than we began it and farther from the goals we had in mind; and that, since victory or defeat can signify only relative degrees of misfortune, even the most glorious military victory would give us no right to face the future in any spirit other than one of sorrow and humbleness for what has happened and of realization that the road ahead, toward a better world, is long and hard—longer and harder, in fact, than it would have been had it been possible to avoid a military cataclysm altogether.

Remembering these things, we will be less inclined to view military operations as ends in themselves, and should find it easier to conduct them in a manner harmonious with our political purposes. If it should fall to us to take up arms against those who today dispose over the Russian people, we can try not to give that people the impression that we are their enemies, or consider them ours. We can try to make them understand the necessity of such hardships as we cannot avoid inflicting on them. We can endeavor to hold constantly before them the evidences of a sympathetic understanding for their past and interest in their future. We can give them the feeling that we are on their side, and that our victory, if it comes, will be used to provide them with a chance to shape their own destiny in the future to a pattern happier than that which they have known in the past. For all of this it is important that we bear in mind what Russia has been, and can be, and not permit political differences to becloud that picture.

National greatness is a difficult thing to define. Every nation is made up of individuals; and among individuals, as is known, there is no uniformity. Some are charming, others irritating; some are honest, others not exactly so; some are strong, others weak; some command admiration, others, by general agreement, are anything but admirable. This is true in our own country; it is true

in Russia. Just what, in these circumstances, national greatness consists of, is hard to say. Certainly it rarely consists of those qualities in which a people thinks itself great; for in nations, as in individuals, the outstanding virtues are generally not the ones for which we fancy ourselves distinguished.

Yet that there *is* such a thing as national greatness is clear; and that the Russian people possess it in high degree is beyond question. They are a people whose progress out of darkness and squalor has been a painful one, marked by enormous sufferings and punctuated by heart-rending setbacks. Nowhere on the face of the globe has the tiny flame of faith in the dignity and charity of man flickered more precariously under the winds that tore at it. Yet it has never gone out; it is not extinguished today even in the heart of the Russian land; and whoever studies the struggle of the Russian spirit through the ages can only bare his head in admiration before those Russian people who kept it alight through their sacrifices and sufferings.

The record of Russian culture to date has proven that this struggle has a significance far wider than the confines of the traditional Russian territory; it is a part, and an extremely important part, of the general cultural progress of mankind. We have only to look at the people of Russian birth or origin living and working in our midst—the engineers, the scientists, the writers, the artists—to know that this is true. It would be tragic if our indignation over Soviet outlooks and policies led us to make ourselves the accomplices of Russian despotism by forgetting the greatness of the Russian people, losing our confidence in their genius and their potential for good, and placing ourselves in opposition to their national feelings. The vital importance of this becomes even clearer when we reflect that we in the outside world who believe in the cause of freedom will never prevail in any struggle against the destructive workings of Soviet power unless the Russian people are our willing allies. That goes for peace, and it goes for war. The Germans, though not fighting at that time in the cause of freedom, learned to their sorrow the impossibility of combatting simultaneously both the Russian people and the Soviet Government.

The greatest difficulty here, of course, lies in the mute and helpless position in which the Russian people find themselves as subjects of a totalitarian régime. Our experiences with Germany have demonstrated that we have not succeeded very well, as a nation, in understanding the position of the man who lives under

the yoke of modern despotism. Totalitarianism is not a national phenomenon; it is a disease to which all humanity is in some degree vulnerable. To live under such a régime is a misfortune that can befall a nation by virtue of reasons purely historic and not really traceable to any particular guilt on the part of the nation as a whole. Where circumstances weaken the powers of resistance, to a certain crucial degree, the virus triumphs. If individual life is to go on at all within the totalitarian framework it must go on by arrangement with the régime, and to some extent in connivance with its purposes. Furthermore, there will always be areas in which the totalitarian government will succeed in identifying itself with popular feelings and aspirations. The relationship between citizen and political authority under totalitarianism is therefore inevitably complicated: it is never pat and simple. Who does not understand these things cannot understand what is at stake in our relations with the peoples of such countries. These realities leave no room for our favored conviction that the people of a totalitarian state can be neatly divided into collaborators and martyrs and that there will be none left over. People do not emerge from this relationship unscathed: when they do emerge they need help, guidance and understanding, not scoldings and sermons.

We will get nowhere with an attitude of emotional indignation directed toward an entire people. Let us rise above these easy and childish reactions and consent to view the tragedy of Russia as partly our own tragedy, and the people of Russia as our comrades in the long hard battle for a happier system of man's coexistence with himself and with nature on this troubled planet.

V

So much for what we do if, contrary to our hopes and our wishes, a war so much talked about should prove impossible to avoid. But supposing we are faced with a continuation of the present state of absence of major warfare? What should our course of action be then?

First of all, have we any grounds to hope, in these circumstances, that there might be changes in Russia of the kind that we are here envisaging? There are no objective criteria for the answer to this question. There is no "proof" one way or another. The answer rests on something which is partly a matter of opinion and judgment, but partly, admittedly, an act of faith. The writer believes the answer to be a positive one: that we are indeed justified

in hoping, and holding it possible, that there may be such changes. But in substantiation of this view it is possible to say only the following.

There can be no genuine stability in any system which is based on the evil and weakness in man's nature—which attempts to live by man's degradation, feeding like a vulture on his anxieties, his capacity for hatred, his susceptibility to error, and his vulnerability to psychological manipulation. Such a system can represent no more than the particular frustrations and bitterness of the generation of men who created it, and the cold terror of those who have been weak or unwise enough to become its agents.

I am not speaking here of the Russian Revolution as such. That was a more complicated phenomenon, with deeper roots in the logic of history. I am speaking of the process by which something claiming to be a hopeful turn in human events, claiming to lead toward a decrease rather than an increase in the sum total of human injustice and oppression, evolved into the shabby purgatory of the police state. Only men with a profound sense of personal failure could find satisfaction in doing to others those things which are always involved in such a system; and whoever has had occasion to look deeply into the eyes of a Communist police officer will have found there, in that dark well of disciplined hatred and suspicion, the tiny gleam of despairing fright which is the proof of this statement. Those who begin by clothing a personal lust for power and revenge with the staggering deceits and oversimplifications of totalitarianism end up by fighting themselves—in a dreary, hopeless encounter which projects itself onto the subject peoples and makes of their happiness and their faith its battlefield.

Men of this sort can bequeath something of the passion of the struggle to those of their close associates who inherit their power. But the process of inheritance cannot be carried much further. People can move along, themselves, as by some force of habit, on the strength of an emotional drive acquired at second hand; but it is no longer theirs to transmit to others. The impulses that thrust men of one generation into so despairing an attitude toward themselves and toward the popular masses in whom they like to see themselves reflected become progressively uninteresting to succeeding generations. The cruelties, the untruths, the endless deriding of man's nature practised in the concentration camps: all these institutions of the police state, though they may first

have something of the lurid fascination that manifestations of danger and anarchy always exert in a well-regulated and composed society, sooner or later end up—like some stale and repetitious pornography—by boring everybody, including those who practise them.

Many of the servants of totalitarian power, it is true, having debased themselves more than their victims and knowing that they have barred themselves from any better future, may cling despairingly to their unhappy offices. But despotism can never live just by the fears of the jailers and hangmen alone; it must have behind it a driving political will. In the days when despotic power could be closely associated with a dynasty or an inherited oligarchy, such a political will could be more enduring. But then, by the same token, it had to take a more benevolent and constructive interest in the people over whom it ruled and from whose labors it fed. It could not afford to live by their total intimidation and degradation. Dynastic continuity compelled it to recognize an obligation to the future, as well as to the present and the past.

The modern police state does not have these qualities. It represents only a fearful convulsion of society, springing from the stimulus of a given historical moment. Society may be grievously, agonizingly ill from it. But society—being something organic, marked by change and renewal and adjustment—will not remain this way indefinitely. The violent maladjustments which caused the convulsion will eventually begin to lose their actuality, and the instinct for a healthier, less morbid, more interesting life will begin to assert itself.

These, then, are the reflections which give the writer, for one, faith that if the necessary alternatives are kept before the Russian people, in the form of the existence elsewhere on this planet of a civilization which is decent, hopeful and purposeful, the day must come—soon or late, and whether by gradual process or otherwise—when that terrible system of power which has set a great people's progress back for decades and has lain like a shadow over the aspirations of all civilization will be distinguishable no longer as a living reality, but only as something surviving partly in recorded history and partly in the sediment of constructive, organic change which every great human upheaval, however unhappy its other manifestations, manages to deposit on the shelf of time.

But how those changes are to come about is something which cannot be foreseen. If there are, indeed, such things as laws of

political development, they will surely play a part here; but then they would be the laws of development peculiar to the phenomenon of modern totalitarianism, and these have not yet been adequately studied and understood. Whether such laws exist or not, developments will be modified both by national character and by the tremendous part which the fortuitous unquestionably plays in the shaping of human events.

These things being so, we must admit with respect to the future of government in Russia, we see "as through a glass, darkly." Superficial evidences would not seem to leave much room for hope that the changes we would wish to see in the attitudes and practices of government in Moscow could come about without violent breaks in the continuity of power, that is, without the overthrow of the system. But we cannot be sure of this. Stranger things have happened—though not much stranger. And, in any case, it is not our business to prejudge the question. It is not necessary for us, merely in order to shape our own conduct in a way conducive to our own interests, to decide what we admittedly cannot really know. We should allow, here, for all possibilities, and should exclude none. The main thing is that we keep clearly in mind the image of what we would like to see in the personality of Russia as an actor on the world stage, and let that be our guide in all our dealings with Russian political factions, including both that which is in power and those which are in opposition to it. And if it should turn out to be the will of fate that freedom should come to Russia by erosion from despotism rather than by the violent upthrust of liberty, let us be able to say that our policy was such as to favor it, and that we did not hamper it by preconception or impatience or despair.

Of one thing we may be sure: no great and enduring change in the spirit and practice of government in Russia will ever come about primarily through foreign inspiration or advice. To be genuine, to be enduring and to be worth the hopeful welcome of other peoples such a change would have to flow from the initiatives and efforts of the Russians themselves. It is a shallow view of the workings of history which looks to such things as foreign propaganda and agitation to bring about fundamental changes in the lives of a great nation. Those who talk of overthrowing the Soviet system by propaganda point, by way of justification of their thesis, to the intensive workings of the Soviet propaganda machine and to the various facets of subversive activity con-

ducted, inspired or encouraged by the Kremlin throughout the world. They forget that the outstanding fact about such activities, on the record of the 33 years over which they have been assiduously conducted, has been their general failure. In the end, military intimidation or invasion has been generally necessary for the actual spread of the Soviet system. It may be argued that China is an exception to this statement; but to what extent China can really be said to be part of the Soviet system we do not know, and to attribute the revolution which has taken place in China in these recent years primarily to Soviet propaganda or instigation is to underestimate grievously, to say the least, a number of other highly important factors.

Any attempt at direct talking by one nation to another about the latter's political affairs is a questionable procedure, replete with possibilities for misunderstanding and resentment. That is particularly true where spirit and tradition differ and the political terminology is not really translatable. This appreciation in no way weakens the importance of the "Voice of America," the function of which, with respect to Russia, is to reflect as faithfully as possible the atmosphere and attitudes of this country, in order that the Soviet citizen may form a fair judgment of them. But this is an entirely different thing from urgings toward this or that political action. We may have our own hopes or ideas as to the implications for the Soviet citizen of the view of American realities which is apparent in the broadcasts of the "Voice" and in such other evidences of American life as reach his consciousness; we may think we know what we would do in the light of this evidence; but it would be a mistake for us to be too explicit and to make these things the basis of suggestions and promptings to him about what he should do in the internal political life of his own country. We are too apt to talk in our terms rather than his, and from an imperfect understanding of his problems and possibilities. And our words, accordingly, are apt to convey meanings entirely different from those which we meant them to convey.

For these reasons, the most important influence that the United States can bring to bear upon internal developments in Russia will continue to be the influence of example: the influence of what it is, and not only what it is to others but what it is to itself. This is not to say that many of those things which are now preoccupying the public mind are not of unquestioned importance: such things as physical strength, armaments, determination and soli-

darity with other free nations. It is not to deny the urgent and overriding necessity for a wise and adroit foreign policy, designed to release and make effective all those forces in the world which, together with our own, can serve to convince the masters of the Kremlin that their grand design is a futile and unachievable one, persistence in which promises no solution of their own predicaments and dilemmas. In fact, there can be no question but that these must remain major preoccupations if war is to be avoided and time is to be gained for the working of more hopeful forces. But they can only remain sterile and negative if they are not given meaning and substance by something which goes deeper and looks further ahead than the mere prevention of war or the frustration of imperialistic expansion. To this, there is general agreement; but what is this "something"? Many people think it only a question of what we urge upon others, in other words, a question of external propaganda. I would submit that it is primarily a question of what we urge upon ourselves. It is a question of the spirit and purpose of American national life itself. Any message we may try to bring to others will be effective only if it is in accord with what we are to ourselves, and if this is something sufficiently impressive to compel the respect and confidence of a world which, despite all its material difficulties, is still more ready to recognize and respect spiritual distinction than material opulence.

Our first and main concern must still be to achieve this state of national character. We need worry less about convincing others that we have done so. In the lives of nations the really worthwhile things cannot and will not be hidden. Thoreau wrote:

> There is no ill which may not be dissipated, like the dark, if you let in a stronger light upon it. . . . If the light we use is but a paltry and narrow taper, most objects will cast a shadow wider than themselves.

Conversely, if our taper is a strong one we may be sure that its rays will penetrate to the Russian room and eventually play their part in dissipating the gloom which prevails there. No iron curtain could suppress, even in the innermost depths of Siberia, the news that America had shed the shackles of disunity, confusion and doubt, had taken a new lease of hope and determination, and was setting about her tasks with enthusiasm and clarity of purpose.